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# STUDY PROJECT

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## MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS

BY

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MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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# ABSTRACT

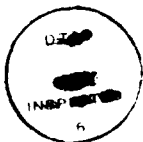
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## INTRODUCTION

"How do we conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the lives of our military and protects the security of the operation while keeping the American public informed through the media?"<sup>1</sup>

General John W. Vessey Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked this question after the 1983 Grenada operation in which the U.S. government made the decision to keep representatives of the news media off the island for the first two days of the operation. On the third day, a 15-member press pool was permitted to report on the events taking place on the island.<sup>2</sup>

Members of the news media raised such furor over being barred from covering the operation that more news reporting was given to the freeze of news coverage than to the military operation itself.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the military has tried to work out a solution to General Vessey's question. In order to fully accomplish this task, we need to review the past relationships which have existed between the military and the media for over 200 years. During this evaluation, we will see that as technological advances in the communications process were made, different strategies were taken by the military to ensure the safety and security for soldiers. The majority of this effort will concentrate on the conflicts which have taken place since 1983. The reason for this is very clear once a person understands that communications technology has improved to the point of providing TV viewers with instantaneous live news coverage from around the world. One only has to turn on CNN to get a full update and

analysis of ongoing events as they happen.

Since 1983, the military has leaned towards using media pools to provide this news coverage of military operations. Media pools are groups of reporters who represent a larger number of their colleagues and file stories for all, rather than just for their own news organizations. The military likes the concept of pooling because it allows them to control the number of reporters in an area of operation. However, the media feel they are being hindered in their efforts to report accurately because not all can get out to where the action is taking place.

Desert Storm has provided us with the ultimate test on military-media relations. Our look into this stage of the relationship will finally provide us with recommendations on how we need to prepare for future conflicts in which we must deal with the media in order to reach the American people and keep to them informed about the progress of the war.

#### PAST HISTORY OF THE MILITARY AND THE MEDIA IN WAR

For the purpose of this paper, we will only venture back to the Revolutionary War period to begin our study of military and media relationships.

As we progress through the various military campaigns, one should be aware that as the news-gathering and ability to transmit the message became more efficient, the military became more and more aware that it must control those messages and news-gathering techniques during times of conflict.

It is interesting to note that not all of the military's

efforts to control the media have always been effective. Efforts by the government have ranged from full censorship, such as in World War II, to minimal control, such as in Vietnam.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Newspapers, pamphlets and handbills were recognized by politicians and military officials as important aids in winning the war.<sup>4</sup>

"Although the press was one of the most powerful tools of the time, it was based on the primitive techniques of eighteenth century news-gathering and by such facilities of communications as existed and by the stage of the development at which the newspaper had arrived."<sup>5</sup> Revolutionary newspapers went into about 40,000 homes, but each issue had a larger number of readers per copy than would be true today.<sup>6</sup> "There were 37 newspapers in the colonies on April 19, 1775, the day of the battle of Lexington and Concord. Most papers were weeklies, although some attempted on occasion semiweekly and even publication three times a week. Paper and ink supplies along with capable printers were major supply problems encountered by the press during this period."<sup>7</sup>

However, time proved to be the biggest obstacle faced by the print media during this period. News about the war was gathered by four primary means: first-hand accounts; the haphazard arrival of private letters from friends, business letters or letters of official and semi-official affairs; word-of-mouth by ship captains, travelers or newcomers; and from clippings of other newspapers.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, it took news a long time to travel from point

to point. News of the Lexington and Concord battle took from one day to six weeks to spread throughout the colonies.'

Even though news was slow to reach everyone, military officials quickly learned the benefits of using the papers for their own purposes. They believed that publishing orders in newspapers was the most effective way to distribute orders to widely dispersed bodies of soldiers.<sup>10</sup> For example, more than ninety percent of the contents of Holt's Journal, exclusive of advertisements, consisted of war news. This helps to explain why civil and military leaders considered newspapers so valuable.<sup>11</sup>

"In spite of the relative freedom of the press to operate, the period was not without public blunders due to news leaks like the ones criticized today. In 1778, Thomas Paine was appointed Secretary to the Committee on Foreign Affairs in Congress...In this position, he was able to obtain information that he later published in John Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet. Writing under the pseudonym of Common Sense, Paine revealed in a letter to the paper that France had been providing secret aid to the American revolutionaries before the Franco-American Alliance became official. Congress was embarrassed. Because of his indiscretion in revealing official secrets of Congress during wartime, Paine was forced to resign his job as Secretary."<sup>12</sup>

Even though Paine inadvertently revealed information which was embarrassing for the government, he was better known for his actual news coverage of life in the field with the troops. His series, The American Crisis, was inspired by his first-hand experience in



marching with General George Washington's tattered troops at a time when "many of the soldiers had only a hazy notion of what the shooting was all about."<sup>13</sup> Paine's words, born from seeing life firsthand among soldiers, served as an inspiration to the troops of General Washington.

"When it came to the military-media relationship, General Washington not only saw the importance of the inspirational words of Paine, he viewed the press as critical to the morale of the entire populace."<sup>14</sup> He, in fact, provided material that might be converted into printing paper so that newspapers could continue being published.<sup>15</sup>

In general, it is fair to say that even with some three dozen newspapers operating during this period, there was still no truly organized means of covering the war. Although the papers served to unite the public and keep them informed, the media had a long way to go before it became more than an instrument of government.

#### THE WAR OF 1812

"As was the case in the Revolutionary War, there was no real attempt by newspapers to organize their coverage during this war. Most news gathered was based upon official information disseminated from Washington, although some editors did organize pony express riders to get information in a more timely manner from the battlefield."<sup>16</sup>

Censorship by the military was unnecessary because information was obtained long after events had taken place. However, the War of 1812 can claim the first true American war correspondent. James

M. Bradford enlisted with General Andrew Jackson's army and he provided a series of letters that described the war to his paper, the St. Francisville Times Piece of Louisiana."

#### THE MEXICAN WAR

War reporting by correspondents during the Mexican War of 1846-1847 began to develop at a rapid pace. F. Lauriston Bullard describes this period of conflict as perhaps "the first war to be adequately and comprehensively reported in the daily press."<sup>14</sup> One reason for this was that the American press started breaking away from the dependency upon official sources for gathering war news.

"The Americans reported wars as they fought them: they ignored rules and precedents, introduced a spirit of competition and welcomed rough writers as enthusiastically as rough riders."<sup>15</sup>

"Intense competition in the Mexican War for priority in news transmission distinguished it from earlier conflicts. Although the telegraph was by then a reality, it did not carry more than a few brief items of importance. Instead, express organizations using horses and riders filled the need. For example, the Baltimore Sun and Philadelphia Ledger kept 60 horses for rushing information to newspapers as quickly as it arrived in New Orleans from Mexico. Another innovative technique to speed publication of the news from the war was instituted by the New Orleans Picayune. That newspaper actually sent boats equipped with composing rooms out to sea to meet slower steamers coming from Mexico. By the time they docked back at the port, the composers had already set the type for the latest stories so that they could be rushed to the Picayune

presses. But the quicker transmission of information did not necessarily reflect a greater quality of news since there were many writer/soldiers...who could not distinguish a skirmish from a battle, and some of the energy devoted to speeding information to the press was misspent on valueless wordage."<sup>10</sup>

The importance of news-gathering and reporting began to grow as a result of this conflict. Technology was just starting to make an impact on the speed with which war news was reported by the media. Thus far, the military really had nothing to fear about the media jeopardizing security and safety.

#### THE CIVIL WAR

In this period, the telegraph, American war correspondents, and censorship emerged as the three areas which set the tone for wartime reporting for the rest of the century. In order to fully understand this statement, we must look at each of the three areas to see how they relate to one another.

The biggest boost in the speedy transmission of news came from the telegraph. On May 25, 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse made his historic transmission from Washington to his assistant in Baltimore. His invention created a new way for messages to be disseminated. By 1861, telegraph lines stretched from Maine to California, using over 50,000 miles of wire.<sup>11</sup>

The use of the telegraph resulted in war reporting that was not only more extensive than in any previous war, but also more immediate. For the first time in American history, it was possible for the public to read about what had happened yesterday, rather

than someone's opinion on what had happened last week."<sup>13</sup>

"Unfortunately, the ability of the telegraph to speed news thousands of miles soon became a liability for war correspondents."<sup>14</sup> In the early stages of the war, incidents of news leaks were numerous. For example, General Sherman had many problems with correspondents, who were not trained to evaluate the messages they were sending out over the telegraph. Sherman, along with other generals, blamed a great deal of their military failure on information leaked by the media to the other side.<sup>14</sup>

Military pressure on newspaper editors to stop telegraphing military activities until they had taken place increased to the point that on August 10, 1861, the War Department issued orders that nothing "concerning military activities--past, present or future--could be telegraphed from Washington except after the actual hostilities."<sup>15</sup> Editors soon learned the necessity of testing the qualifications of their reporters. Thus, press accreditation became another tool for the military to use to help solve news leaks. One incident involving accreditation and censorship occurred when Thomas E. Knox, a correspondent for the New York Herald, transmitted information that clearly violated military regulations of censorship. General Sherman had the reporter arrested to be held as a spy. It took President Lincoln to get Knox free, but Sherman got what he wanted--the understanding that all correspondents must be accredited or recognized journalists and that they must be acceptable to commanders in the field.<sup>16</sup>

Although this was only a minor event, it foreshadowed options that future battlefield commanders, faced with similar problems, could opt to take as a means of controlling the press.

#### THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

It can be said that in this war, correspondents did not understand what their roles were in covering it.

"Was it their job to report what went on or to direct or fight the war?...Never, before or after, were correspondents so conspicuous for audacity and daring--- and interfered in matters not their business."<sup>17</sup>

Competition to get the story first, often times, provided the enemy with information which could hinder the U.S. war efforts. Thus, this period became known as a period of yellow journalism, sensationalism and other extremes in news reporting.<sup>18</sup> "In this war, more than others in the nation's history to this period, the press seemed more determined to get the news. For example, one idea was to send cameras to every ship in the American Navy and offer five hundred dollars for the negative of a good battle scene if it should reach the home office before any other paper got it. A cote of carrier pigeons was established at a telegraph office near Key West for service on dispatch boats. Another example was to send a portable balloon to Key West to be taken out on a news yacht. The idea was to send a reporter up in the balloon. From this advantage point, he would report by wire to a man below, who would have the pigeons ready to fly."<sup>19</sup> Finally, it has been charged that many correspondents established headquarters at Key West and wrote news dispatches based on rumors and unconfirmed reports

received from Cuba.<sup>10</sup>

"Government, however, was just as determined to hinder press access to the news. The need for secrecy was apparent. Cables allowed fleet commanders to get orders while at sea if near a cable terminal. On the other hand, cables also made it possible for the enemy to receive in Madrid reports of U.S. military and naval plans and to make use of the information in messages to commanders in Cuba. The very technology that made this trans-Atlantic communication possible seemed to make controlling its use more necessary."<sup>11</sup>

By the time the United States became involved in the Cuban conflict, the American government was taking steps towards censorship. Controlling the means to communicate the news was just as important as controlling the correspondents. Two weeks before the United States' official entry into the war, the Navy took possession of the cables at Key West.<sup>12</sup> By controlling the cable offices at Key West, Tampa and New York City, the government could control information the newspapers received from their correspondents.

"One of the problems of allowing press access to the news, while controlling its publication through censorship and direct control of the transmission systems, was that it did not prevent the stateside printing of rumors and misinformation."<sup>13</sup>

As in the Civil War, the press was guilty of publishing news that was detrimental to military actions. Censorship was not very effective and press correspondents were free to enter the war front

as they chose. Thus, we can see that up until now, the question of how to allow access and news coverage versus the need for security of the operation remained unresolved. Up to this point, military and media confrontations were relatively minor and not antagonistic.

#### WORLD WAR I

Americans had a great interest in World War I and wanted to know all they could about the events taking place overseas. News was transmitted from overseas by telephone and the trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. These tools greatly speeded the news-gathering and news-disseminating process.

Even though radio broadcasting had come into its own prior to World War I, it was not used because the government took control over all radio operations. Thus, new technology did not greatly effect how news was disseminated during this war.

It was during the beginning stages of World War I that the military and government began to take great measures to ensure the control of information. Censorship, press accreditation and numerous Congressional Acts were implemented to dictate how correspondents covered the war and reported back to the American people.

It is interesting to point out at this time, that there were only about 600 American correspondents for newspapers, magazines, press associations and syndicates in Europe covering the war. And of these correspondents, only about forty actually covered the war.<sup>14</sup> One reason for so few reporters was the strict accreditation

process. In September, 1917, war correspondents were subjected to regulations which set up the accreditation process. Under the regulations, a correspondent was either described and certified as an "accredited" or "visiting" correspondent.

Accredited correspondents were required to wear an American officer's uniform, without insignia, and with a green brassard bearing the letter "C" in red.<sup>15</sup> They were also required to sign an agreement acknowledging the rules of censorship and their limitations on travel within the war zone.<sup>16</sup> Their movement was also governed by a press officer.<sup>17</sup>

"The organization of the accredited correspondent was required to pay \$1,000 to the Army to cover equipment and maintenance expenses. A \$10,000 bond was required to be posted to ensure that the correspondent would behave. If there were any infractions of the rules, the \$10,000 was forfeited and given to charity."<sup>18</sup>

Visiting correspondents were restricted by minor guidelines. For example, they could wear anything but the uniform of the accredited correspondent. While in the war zone, they were under the supervision of a press officer or they had to obtain papers that delineated their areas of access. They were also required to sign a paper agreeing to follow all rules that had been established by the military.<sup>19</sup>

The major difference between the two types of correspondents was that the accredited correspondents did not have to be accompanied by a press officer. They were provided passes and identity cards which allowed them to travel in authorized areas.



They could visit the front anytime as long as it was stable."<sup>40</sup>

It is important to note, that the military recognized the need and duty of the press to keep the American public informed. In fact, in 1918, a general order was issued to ensure that the military supported accredited correspondents so they could perform their duties for the American people."<sup>41</sup>

## WORLD WAR II

The newest of electronic technologies brought World War II into more homes, and consequently more lives, of the American people. Although correspondents continued to communicate news of the war by telegraph, telephone, cable, newsreels and print, radio broadcasts brought live coverage to the American people. During World War II, it was estimated that over sixty million radio sets kept the American people informed of the latest developments on the fighting fronts."<sup>42</sup>

Radio networks soon realized the vast demand for war news and not only increased their number of news programs, but they also began telecasts from around the world.

As quickly as the networks discovered the importance of these real time newscasts, government acted as quickly to establish controls over radio communications.

"An office of Censorship was formed to censor mail, cable and radio communications between the United States and other countries. A new agency, the Office of War Information, was formed to originate news and coordinate the government's propaganda effort."<sup>43</sup>

The difficulty in covering World War II, from a

correspondent's point of view, was that it was fought on different fronts, each with its own unique communications problems. Since reporters covered the war from all over the world, a new system was used by the government to ensure coverage of major battles. This system was the use of press or media pools.<sup>44</sup> Coverage of major events, such as D-Day, required the cooperation of the press and the military. The press was almost treated like another branch of the service. Everything was done to ensure the press was able to cover the story.<sup>45</sup>

Censorship, accreditation, and access were issues from time to time, but not as noteworthy as they were during World War I. Censorship and transportation were still the key problems for correspondents. For the most part, correspondents were free to go where they wished but they had to depend on the military for most of their transportation.

It is interesting to note how different commanders developed their relationships with the war correspondents during World War II. For example, "General Mark W. Clark, the Fifth Army commander in Italy, personally briefed correspondents in detail before an attack and then ordered his corps and division commanders to make sure that reporters viewed all the frontline action they wanted."<sup>46</sup>

General Dwight D. Eisenhower once told a group of editors, "Public opinion wins wars,...I have always considered as quasi-staff officers, correspondents accredited to my headquarters."<sup>47</sup>

This treatment did not hold true for correspondents assigned to cover General Douglas C. MacArthur. They felt bitter and

complained that MacArthur's information officers were more inspired to glorify the general's image rather than honestly deal with the facts.<sup>43</sup>

All in all, it is fair to say that during World War II, correspondents enjoyed a relationship with the military and the American people that would never again be the same.

#### KOREAN WAR

The biggest technological development during this period was television. However, just as radio development was controlled until after World War I, television was not able to expand until after World War II. "The 1948 to 1951 period is the generally accepted date for the arrival of national television networking. In January 1949, the Midwest and the East coast were linked by coaxial cable and by September 1951, the West Coast link-up occurred."<sup>44</sup>

"Although this new technology offered the potential to give news reporting more immediacy than ever before, the Korean War was not covered by television as Vietnam would later be in the 60's and 70's. The technology needed for live coverage, the satellite relay, was not available."<sup>45</sup> Thus, radio, and film from newsreels, and television were the electronic media used to cover the war. Print and photo journalism continued to perform their missions of keeping Americans informed about the war.

During the early stages of the conflict, media censorship did not exist. As a result, the old rules of censorship used during World War II were again adapted by the war correspondents.

However, it quickly became apparent that the military and media had a hard time deciding or agreeing on the key definition of security.<sup>51</sup> This disagreement led to some information being reported which might have jeopardized the operation and lives of soldiers. As a result of this confusion and disagreement, "complete censorship was ordered on December 23, 1950. All correspondents were placed under military surveillance."<sup>52</sup>

"The press was allowed access to the battlefield, but censorship, poor communications facilities, and lack of transportation to the battle area made correspondents more dependent on the military. The relationship between the press and the military grew strained. The military did not want reports published or aired that could give aid and comfort to the enemy."<sup>53</sup> The media wanted to report the facts as they saw them, such as poor equipment used by our soldiers or poor command decisions being made by commanders.

The real conflict settled on whether or not this reporting was constructive criticism or malicious attacks against the military leadership.

Numerous reporters questioned whether or not they should criticize the government during times of national crisis. Correspondent Edward R. Murrow, a correspondent during World War II, stated:

"I have never believed that correspondents who move in and out of the battle area, engage in privileged conversations with commanders and with troops and who have access to public platform should engage in criticism of command decisions or of commanders while the battle is in progress."<sup>54</sup>

The frustration and distrust between the military and the media reached its peak during the coverage of the United Nations peace talks. American correspondents were not allowed to cover the talks. The only information they received was from government officials. Unfortunately, the correspondents started comparing notes of the talks with other international reporters allowed to cover the talks by their countries. It was soon learned, by the American correspondents, that they were not always being told the correct information by the military officials.<sup>55</sup> It was at this point that many correspondents started questioning the purpose of the war.

In comparing the Korean War with the World Wars, it is interesting to note that it was not new technology which created the split between the military and the media. The split came because of what the correspondents had to say about the conflict. Reporters did not sense the strong public support for this war. They were not constrained by the propaganda offices of the World Wars. Finally, they began to question more and more decisions made by politicians and military commanders. The military began to believe that correspondents were only interested in furthering their careers over the welfare of soldiers. Thus, an attitude began to develop, an attitude of distrust, which would come to a head in Vietnam.

#### VIETNAM

Much has been written about the Vietnam War. It is not the purpose of this paper to decide if the Vietnam War could have been

won or not had the press not turned the American public against the war. For those seeking more information and answers to questions such as this, one should read The Military and the Media, 1962-1968, by William M. Hammond. It is the most complete document I have found on the controversy which existed between the military and the media during this conflict.

Hammond believes that every war the U.S. has ever fought has been a public relations war. He quotes historian Norman Graebner as saying:

"A war that goes badly and is still pursued must become, by its very nature, a public relations war. If a war must be explained and defended every day of the week, one might as well drop it because the reasons for fighting and dying have to be more obvious than that."<sup>56</sup>

What is clear from the Vietnam War is that the media became the only contact that the American people had in order to better understand the war. Reporting, during this time frame, can be remembered by the media's ability to gain access to the battle. Censorship, as we knew it from past wars, was never implemented by General William C. Westmoreland.<sup>57</sup>

Ground rules were implemented in lieu of censorship. Reporters found these rules to be more of an aid to them than a hinderance because it gave them a guide on what they could and could not report. As long as the media understood the reasoning behind the ground rules, they had no problems. It became a problem when the press felt that the military was suppressing bad news from them and not telling them the whole story.

Vietnam has been called by many the "television war." It was the first time in our history that combat, with all its horror and hardness, was brought into American homes each evening.<sup>54</sup> While we did not see actual live reports from the front, the reports were as timely as technology allowed up to that period.

Television focused on action and drama, and the military played into the hands of television journalists. Such terms as "search and destroy," "fire fights," "body counts" and "precision bombing" played right into the hands of TV journalists looking for good action reports. The military tried to get journalists to focus on the military's Vietnamese program successes, but the media wanted to focus on battle and action stories which were more dramatic.

"...stories we did, about land reform, or about programs to win the hearts and minds of the people... bored the tears out of viewers...you get one battle piece which lasts two minutes, and it erases the memory of everything you've done for two weeks..."<sup>55</sup>

The military also played into the hands of the politicians. The Johnson administration was unwilling to go to Congress and ask for a declaration of war or to even call up reserve forces. As a result, the administration had a hard time winning public support for a war so far away from the concerns of the American people.

"It was within the power of the Johnson administration to go to Congress, ask for a declaration of war, presumably get one...but they wouldn't pay the price...Johnson was worried about endangering his Great Society programs."<sup>56</sup>

This lack of action, from the administration, led to a lack of national will and focus on the part of the American people.

Johnson, ultimately, forced the military to act as the liaison between the government and the people. He had Westmoreland go before Congress and the public in order to try to justify the war. This act firmly placed the military on the side of politicians, at least according to the media. It further served to alienate the military and media from each other.

The one main event which looms as the turning point during the war concerning the military-media relationship was the reporting on the 1968 TET offensive. During this offensive, public support changed nearly twenty percentage points in surveys from support for the war to that of "why are we fighting the war."<sup>1</sup> The TET offensive was initially reported as a major defeat for the U.S. military.

"Daily press reports filed from all parts of Vietnam contributed to the sense of disaster, as they concentrated on reporting the destruction caused by the initial Communists attacks throughout Vietnam."<sup>1</sup>

It is ironic that now many reporters and historians look back and feel the offensive turned out to be a complete victory for the U.S. military. It was during this period that military leaders began to feel that the media was biased, not reporting both sides of the story, and what was reported was inaccurate.

While some of this is true, it can also be said that the military was also partly to blame for some of the problems which existed between themselves and the media.

The military command tried to present the war in the best light for the military. In doing so, it often did not give all



the details of an action, for fear of looking bad in the eyes of the public. Reporters began to feel that the military was trying to suppress bad news as well as to cover mistakes made during operations. The famed "Five O'Clock Follies" briefings are an example of how the military put out massive amounts of information to the press without properly putting the information into a context which would help explain the overall picture. Reporters were left on their own to figure out if they were being told the whole story or only part of the story.

The one thing certain about the TET offensive was that it brought to light the distrust which both the military and the media felt for each other. This distrust did not end when the war ended. After the war, many military officials still blamed the media for turning public support against the military and the war.

#### FUROR OVER THE GRENADA OPERATION

"Don't tell them anything. When it's over, tell them who won."<sup>41</sup>

No, this is not a quote from anyone associated with the Grenada operation. However, judging from the furor raised over the government's decision to bar reporters from covering that operation in the early stages, it certainly seems plausible that it could have come from an official during this period.

In October 1983, American forces, along with forces from six neighboring Caribbean countries, landed on the island of Grenada. These forces were not accompanied by any representatives of the U.S. news media. In fact, newsmen were officially barred from the

island until the third day of the operation, when a pool of 15 reporters was allowed to cover what was taking place."

This portion of the paper will examine the controversy that surrounded the government's decision to bar reporters from covering this invasion. We will look at how improvements in technology influenced the government's decisions and we will examine the government's reasoning for barring reporters from the operation. We will look at the media's reactions to the ban. Finally, we will review what happened to military-media relations as a result of the Grenada invasion.

NBC television commentator John Chancellor noted that the means for instant communications must be addressed by the government before operations such as Grenada begin.

"War reported by quill pens was more bearable to the folks at home than living room wars brought to us on videotape by satellite...how should a government deal with the public's right to know if that right to know erodes the support the public gives the government?"<sup>43</sup>

Chancellor also points out that during this time period, "sixty-five percent of the American public depended on television as their prime source of news."

Improvements in print media technology decreased the time needed to get the message from the reporter to the reader from days to hours. Technological improvements in electronic media made it possible for radio or TV correspondents to cover a story; and send it back through satellite and ground link-ups and have the story aired in a matter of minutes. Electronic media, given the proper equipment, could also cover a news story live and have it aired

live to the viewing or listening audience.

This brought about inherent dangers for the military when it considered the possibilities of live television or radio coverage.

"What will happen when we have real time TV coverage of the battlefield? Won't early electronic transmission of raw news reports and unedited videotape provide the watchful enemy with critical with information about our positions, weapons, casualties and plans?"<sup>66</sup>

The military considered the possibility that early reports could hinder the security of the operation. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger told the media that the decision not to notify reporters and to ban reporters from the operation was due to the need for secrecy of the operation and for the concern and safety of the students, soldiers, and reporters.

"The decision was made by the commander to whom we entrusted this dangerous mission to withhold from the press advance notification of the Grenada operation and to keep reporters and other noncombatants off the island... until the American citizens were safe..."<sup>67</sup>

The media responded to this explanation that throughout history, news organizations have shown they could be trusted to keep wartime secrets. They also pointed out that their safety had never been an issue of concern in past wars.

"...American newsmen know that war is dangerous. The risk goes with the territory...140 American reporters lost their lives in World War II, and another 53 died in Vietnam."<sup>68</sup>

Although a media pool was allowed on the island 48 hours after the invasion, the media continued to report its outrage. NBC commentator John Chancellor argued that the military had no right to ban the media.

"Things get dangerous...when the government takes unto itself the function of informing the public...When your friendly government press agent, military or civilian, is your only source of information, you ought to be worried."<sup>69</sup>

Chancellor was perplexed to find that out NBC was receiving letters from the public which ran ten to one in favor of the press restrictions.<sup>70</sup>

The fact that the public approved of the press ban only served to further infuriate the media. They took up the cause to tell the public why they were wrong in supporting a press ban. The media pointed out that it was evident that the post-Vietnam military attitudes influenced the decision to shut the media out of Grenada. Drew Middleton, writing for The New York Times Magazine, stated, "The majors and commanders of the Vietnam War who believed the media had worked against them had now become influential generals and admirals determined not to expose the Grenada operation to what the military continued to view as a hostile adversary."<sup>71</sup>

One can quickly see the press-and-military-relations fiasco caused by the handling of the Grenada operation. It did serve to point out that hostilities still existed between both sides. It caused them to re-evaluate their missions, especially when dealing with the possibility of future conflicts.

One month after the Grenada operation, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John W. Vessey Jr., asked Major General {Ret.} Winant Sidle to convene a panel of experts from the military and the media to examine the problems caused by the manner in which

the press was handled during the Grenada operation.

The Military-Media Relations Panel {Sidle Panel} met from 6-10 February 1984. This fourteen-member panel heard testimony from a variety of groups that included news media representatives, educators, and the military. The panel's final report contained eight detailed recommendations concerning how the military-media relationship might be improved after the Grenada operation.

Along with the eight recommendations, a statement of principle was included in the report. The statement called for cooperation.

"The highest civilian and military officials must reaffirm the historic principle that American journalists, print and broadcast,...should be present during military operations. And the news media should reaffirm their recognition of the importance of U.S. military mission security and troop safety...Second, the highest civilian and military officials should reaffirm that military plans should include planning for press access..."<sup>71</sup>

The following recommendations were designed to solve the problems faced by the military and the media during the Grenada operation. I have condensed them in order to save space.

Recommendation 1: Public Affairs planning for military operations should be conducted concurrently with operational planning.

Recommendation 2: When it becomes apparent during planning that news media pooling provides the only feasible means for press access, planning should provide for the largest press pool possible and then minimize the length of time it is used until full coverage is feasible.

Recommendation 3: In connection with the use of pools, pre-established and updated press accreditation along with notification lists should be used to speed the notification and deployment process.

Recommendation 4: Media access to military operations should be by voluntary compliance by the media with security guidelines or ground rules established by the military.

Recommendation 5: Public Affairs planning should include sufficient equipment and qualified military personnel whose function is to assist correspondents in covering the operation. Military escorts should help correspondents get to the action.

Recommendation 6: Planners must consider media communications requirements and assure sufficient availability to all the media to send reports out quickly.

Recommendation 7: Planning should include transportation support.

Recommendation 8: Military and media leaders should meet to discuss mutual problems existing between military and media relationships.<sup>73</sup>

Sidle presented his report to General Vessey in April of 1984. On August 23, 1984, the Department of Defense released the findings of the report. In a prepared statement, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger directed implementation of those portions of the report which meet the panel's criterion of providing maximum news media coverage of U.S. military operations consistent with security and safety of the Armed Forces.<sup>74</sup>

Needless to say, the report received mixed reviews. Some stated it was a positive effort by the military to improve their relationship with the media. Others said there were too many items left to the discretion of commanders in the field which may create another situation such as in Grenada.

News organizations started criticizing various recommendations. Some felt that if the military was allowed to plan an operation and consider how the press would cover it, the military would implement too many restrictions. Others thought the selection of journalists for media pools was unfair. Most felt that press access would be hindered by military escorts. All felt that

the existing recommendations looked more like censorship than a moderate restriction on certain types of information.

"Certain information is not releasable, such as, information concerning future military plans...information on any vulnerabilities, weaknesses or shortfalls in American units; information against hostile targets, and information on the effectiveness of enemy tactics or operations."<sup>75</sup>

Finally, the media were concerned that the recommendations did not ensure the deployment of the press pool. They noted that two conditions had to be met for deployment. The first was that the host country must agree to having media in their country, and second, the use of the press pool must be approved by the military chain of command.<sup>76</sup>

While the Sidle report made several recommendations to resolve the strained relations between the military and the media, it did not go far enough to alleviate the fears of either party. Military planners were still concerned about operational security and safety for troops. The media was still fearful that they would be excluded from future operations.

During the next few years, it became apparent that the military was trying to address the problems which occurred in Grenada and to implement the Sidle Panel's recommendations.

Press pools were formed to test the system for the media and the military. Pools were tested in operations at the National Training Center, Fort Campbell, the Persian Gulf, and in Honduras. Some pools were successful, others were failures. The key, however, was that press pools were tested and problems were worked

out before the next test.

During this period, it became evident to the military that press pools were the most efficient way to ensure that the American people would be kept informed during the initial stages of military operations. It was easier for the military to control one or two media pools versus mass numbers of reporters trying to get into an area of operation. It was also easier for the military to control the areas that the media pools were allowed to enter.

The military recognized the importance of public support for military operations. Press pools allowed the military some form of control over the media to ensure security of the operation and the safety of soldiers, while still keeping the American people informed about the operation.

The events on December 20, 1989, would prove to be the first real test for the deployment and use of the press pool concept.

#### OPERATION JUST CAUSE

The success of Operation Just Cause, which began on December 20, 1989 and ended on January 31, 1990, is undeniable. The operation involved more than 22,000 U.S. troops from all services. Twenty-three soldiers were killed and 324 wounded in the operation.<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, the operation showed that the military still had a long way to go before solving the problem of working with the media in order to keep the American people informed about military operations.

While many improvements were made in this operation with



respect to allowing the media access to cover the operation, numerous problems were found to still exist from the Grenada era.

From the initial alert of the media pool, which began at seven-thirty p.m. on December 19, until the pool was disbanded on December 23, public affairs officers faced one problem after another in trying to ensure success of the media pool concept.

From the start, the Pentagon failed to get the pool organized, failed to get reporters to Panama in time and failed to provide them with proper support once they were on the ground.

The military soon learned that the press pool sent to Panama was too large. The pool was made up of six print reporters, four photographers, a radio reporter, three television reporters, two technicians, three Pentagon representatives, and 2,500 pounds of gear. This made the pool too visible in areas where military units were using stealth and economy of force to maneuver. The pool could have been split into two or three smaller pools, but this only served to magnify a transportation problem which existed throughout the operation. It came to pass that lack of coordination, planning and transportation kept the pool from filing their initial reports for eight hours after the operation started."

The military did not plan properly for the technical support necessary for media to operate. The media center was not equipped to handle the number of reporters that came to cover the story. By 20 January, over 800 correspondents were officially registered with the media center."

Initially, only fourteen telephones and lines were available

to the correspondents. This was not adequate for them to file stories, transmit still photos and maintain television uplinks."<sup>10</sup>

Housing and feeding this great influx of media had not been anticipated and caused problems in caring for the media."<sup>11</sup>

The pool members were concerned that they were not being updated daily as to the overall picture of events taking place in Panama. During the time the pool was in operation, there were no regularly scheduled daily briefings for them in Panama."<sup>12</sup>

A major military fear occurred even before the operation began and that had to do with security of the operation. It was alleged that when the Time magazine's reporter for the pool was notified of the operation, he was at a Christmas party of over 200 guests. As he departed, all wished him well on covering what they assumed to be the invasion of Panama."<sup>13</sup> If this is true, the military suffered a serious breach of security which could have endangered the operation.

Media access proved lacking in this operation. It is apparent that early in the operation, the media pool was not allowed access to early combat operations. This occurred because of poor planning for transportation and poor coordination with commanders at all levels of the operation. Fred Francis, of NBC News, was quoted as saying that the staffs of both General Thurman and LTG Carl Steiner, seemed to care little as to what access was provided to the pool. Francis stated that most commanders were not prepared for reporters and seemed to go out of their way to keep the pool away from combat."<sup>14</sup> A good case can be made that the military

failed to properly plan for this part of the operation, which meant ensuring that all commanders understood the importance of giving the media access to the early operations.

In evaluating the operation, an interesting point surfaced as to whether or not a pool should have been used or not during the operation. The Sidle Panel recommended that a pool only be used when it is the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to the operation. Coverage of the Panama operation could have been handled by the group of regional reporters already based in and around Panama. Had a regional pool been used, correspondents could have already been on the ground and reporting the initial opening events of the operation.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, I think the national media pool was used for political reasons so that the administration could say they supported getting national reporters on the ground early in the operation.

The military escort policy proved to be only marginally successful during this operation. Military escorts were used to help solve problems in transportation and for coordination with field commanders. However, it was apparent to the media that these escorts had little credibility with ground commanders. Most were seen as helpful in solving minor problems, but to the media, the escorts seemed to lack a tactical understanding of the events taking place on the ground.<sup>16</sup>

While Just Cause was successful, the military and media still had many problems which needed to be resolved. It would be a short seven months before the next test would begin.

### DESERT SHIELD/STORM

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces swept through the small nation of Kuwait and claimed that nation as part of Iraq. During the next eight months, the world would be able to witness firsthand, almost instantaneously, the events that unfolded in that crisis.

Once it became certain that the United States would send forces to Saudi Arabia to protect them from possible attack by Iraq, it also became certain that the media would be needed to cover the events taking place in the Gulf region.

While negotiations were going on between the Departments of State and Defense with the Saudi government, they were also going on to ensure that the international media would be allowed to cover the story. On August 10, the decision was made to allow a Department of Defense media pool into the country to report on the deployment of U.S. and coalition forces into Saudi Arabia.

On August 13, a media pool made up of 17 journalists landed at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The mission given to the public affairs personnel responsible for the media pool was to ensure that it was successful and not have it end up like other media pools in the past."

Once on the ground, the pool and the military escorts found that they had to create an infrastructure of technical communications support which was not yet in place to support all the media requirements. However, as the days went on, support grew to ensure the pool was capable of performing its mission.

With the exception of minor problems, the media pool worked

well and was able to cover the initial deployment of forces. The pool was disbanded on August 22, when full news coverage was allowed by the Saudi government and the military.

The host country, in conjunction with the military, established guidelines for the incoming media to follow when reporting about the deployment. The media had to be accompanied by military escorts to the military units they wanted to visit. As the number of correspondents grew in-country, the military established sign up rosters for the media. These lists allowed only a certain number of reporters to go to a specific unit on a specific day. If this had not been implemented, the press would have overwhelmed various units in their deployment stages.

From late August to early January 1991, the military was able to handle the vast number of correspondents trying to cover the story. A Joint Information Bureau (JIB) was set up at the Dhahran International Hotel. The mission of the JIB was to aid the media in covering the deployment of forces. This became an increasingly difficult task as the number of correspondents grew to over 1,000 by early January.

As the months wore on, journalist became restless about being controlled by the military. Many correspondents were not able to get out of the Dhahran area and report on events because the list system could only handle so many reporters daily. Reporters began to complain about not enough access to the troop units. This was only a minor problem compared to the fact that war seemed to have an increasingly good possibility of occurring due to the unstable

situation on the political front. The military began to plan for media coverage during war.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs established a training program to exercise media pools in time of war. This program was designed to get military leaders and media reporters familiar with how each would operate during a war environment. Media ground rules were established and sent out for comment to news organizations in late December. It is fair to say that the initial set of ground rules were so detailed and specific that it made covering a story very difficult. The proposed rules were very restrictive and were designed to ensure total security of the operation and safety for soldiers."

These proposed rules met with fierce criticism from the media. Michael R. Gordon, writing for the New York Times, felt the rules were far more restrictive than the guidelines used in Vietnam."

He stated that the Pentagon said the restrictions would be necessary to protect the security of the military operation and the privacy of the troops."

Many news agencies came on board to say that the proposed rules were excessive and aimed at preventing politically damaging disclosures by soldiers and at shielding the American public from the consequences of war."

Because of the protests raised by the media, the chief Pentagon spokesman, Pete Williams, issued a statement saying the rules would be reviewed and possibly revised.

On January 14, the final guidelines for the media were

published. The following is a summary of the guidelines

#### GUIDELINES FOR NEWS MEDIA

- News media must carry anything they take with them.
- Light discipline will be followed during night operations.
- Because of host-nation requirements, reporters must remain with their public affairs escorts.
- Casualty information is extremely sensitive. Photos or videotape showing a recognizable face, name tag, or other feature should not be used.
- Medical news coverage will be in compliance with the instructions of doctors and medical officers.
- Media pools will be established to provide initial coverage of U.S. forces. News products must be pooled.
- News media personnel who are not members of the official media pools will not be permitted into forward areas.
- In the event of hostilities, media pool products will be subject to review before release to determine if they contain sensitive information.
- On the scene public affairs escort officers will review the reports, discuss problems with the reporter, and in the limited circumstances when no agreement can be reached, send the material to the JIB for review by the JIB director and appropriate news media representative. If no agreement can be reached, the issue will be forwarded to OASD[PA] for review. The ultimate decision rests with the originating reporter's news organization.
- Correspondents will not carry weapons.<sup>1</sup>

The ground rules also contained the type of information which should not be reported because of the possibility of jeopardizing operations and endangering lives. Again, I have summarized this information.

OPERATION DESERT STORM  
GROUND RULES

The following information should not be reported for security/safety reasons:

- Information on troop strength, aircraft, weapons systems, on-hand equipment, or supplies. Unit size may be described in general terms such as "company-size," or "multibattalion."

- Any information that reveals details for future plans, operations, or strikes, including postponed or cancelled operations.

- Information, photography or imagery revealing locations of forces.

- Information of rules of engagement details.

- Information on intelligence collection activities, including targets, methods, and results.

- Information on friendly troop movements or deployments.

- Information of identification of mission aircraft points of origin.

- Information on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, direct or indirect fire, or security measures.

- Information on missing or downed aircraft or ships while search and rescue operations are planned or underway.

- Information on special operations forces' methods, unique equipment or tactics.

- Information on operational or support vulnerabilities."

While the media, for the most part, felt that the military had softened some of the ground rules from the initial draft, they still felt that the rules were far too restrictive and would not allow them to fully provide the American people with a true picture of what was taking place in the Gulf.

From January 10, until the fighting stopped on February 27,



one only had to look in the daily newspapers, weekly magazines or on the television to hear or read about how the military was "censoring" the media and keeping the media from reporting about the gruesome details of war.

The media complained that fewer than 100 reporters were allowed to talk with soldiers because of the rigid press pool system. They complained about having their stories delayed or changed because of the security review. They anguished over the lack of access to American units. They feared the daily briefings were not telling them the whole story. They complained that the pool system was broken and was not functioning properly because so few of the reporters were getting out in the pools. They vented their frustrations to anyone who would listen. Yet, the media provided excellent coverage about American soldiers and the events taking place in the Gulf.

From the military's point of view, the guidelines and rules were working well to ensure security and safety. The rules were established to prevent correspondents from unknowingly or unwittingly jeopardizing the security of the mission or harming our soldiers. With such a great influx of correspondents, it was evident that many of them had little or no knowledge about the military or military operations. Rules were needed for them. At the Pentagon, over 300 new reporters were registered at the Pentagon to cover the daily press updates." Many of these reporters had never covered a military related story.

What made the Gulf war so different from past wars was the

real time coverage of events by the electronic media. The American public also realized that what they were seeing was live and taking place right before their eyes. Events that happened in Baghdad were seen live in Saudi Arabia and the United States at the same time. It soon became clear that the most important new weapons of this war were the lightweight television cameras and the television satellites.<sup>35</sup>

For the most part, the military felt the media pools were successful. They felt that Desert Shield/Storm were covered fully from the start of the air campaign to the land and naval campaigns. More importantly, the military felt that the American people were getting all the information they needed in an organized manner and not from 1,000 unguided correspondents roaming all over the battlefield trying to scoop one another. Imagine the confusion and inaccurate reporting if controls had not been in place during the operation.

The security review system drew lots of criticism from correspondents, but it proved to be necessary. With instantaneous live coverage, security can be violated immediately if no controls are established. Initial SCUD launches caused great concern for the military. The concern was not so much that the SCUDs were launched, but that correspondents were reporting where they were landing and the effect they were having. The review process solved the problem of giving information to the enemy which might have helped them in planning for future shots.

Ultimately, the American people determined that they were

getting enough information in order to form clear opinions about the war. In numerous polls, the American public said they approved of the military restrictions on the media. A Washington Post-ABC poll stated that 80% of Americans approved of the restrictions and that 60% thought there should be more restrictions placed on the media.<sup>96</sup>

During Senate hearings, held in February, designed to examine the military restrictions placed on the media in the Gulf war, it soon became apparent that committee members had little sympathy for the media. Senator Herbert Kohl {D-Wis.} said the Pentagon is doing "an honest, honorable and effective job" in disseminating information on the war. Senator William Roth {R-Del.} cited concerns over excessive reporting of details of the war could harm the safety of our soldiers. Senator John Heinz {R-Pa.} said that "the performance of the media leaves a lot to be desired." And Senator Joseph Lieberman {D-Conn.} said "it would be disastrous to allow journalists to broadcast whatever they wish."<sup>97</sup>

Finally, polls of the American public showed great support for the military's competence and openness while they were unfavorable towards the media. "Seventy-eight percent of Americans vouchsafed great confidence in the military, while a minuscule 22 percent had confidence in the press."<sup>98</sup>

In summary, the military and the public felt they were well served by the media. The media, however, felt that their hands had been shackled because they were not allowed total freedom to cover the battlefield.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CONFLICTS

Hopefully, this paper has pointed out that controversy between the military and the media has existed for a long time. The media in Vietnam brought that war home to a nation that began to question why we were fighting over there. In Grenada and Panama, disputes about the way the military treated the media only added fuel to a fire that was still burning hot.

In the Gulf war, the first few weeks of media coverage went reasonably well in terms of relations between the two groups. However, as the possibility of war drew near, serious disputes erupted about the rules established by the military.

Each organization has a legitimate and essential role in informing the public about combat operations. Each organization also has needs and concerns that must be considered by its counterpart.

The military must provide official information as part of its accountability to the public. The media has the right to provide an independent accounting on the same activities as a check on the military."

I realize that neither organization is going to be totally satisfied with having to work with each other, but they must learn to establish relationships which will ensure that they can work together in good faith.

Both sides need to accept the reality that the military information system used for press briefings is not designed to meet the journalists' desires of independent observation and detail."

In turn, journalists must realize the need for the security and safety restrictions placed on them during operations.

For the most part, journalists will accept restrictions on information that could jeopardize the security of a mission or the lives of military personnel. The American public also accepts media restrictions and has shown that they expect the military to initiate security and safety restrictions.

The military needs to recognize that the media lends credibility to the military. The media is a primary way for the military to spread word of their accomplishments.

As a result of this research, I would offer the following suggestions and recommendations for military-media relations in future wars or conflicts.

- The military must accept the fact that the media is our principal means of getting our story to the public in times of conflict. We must use the media as a command information tool for the families back home.

- The military needs to educate local reporters back at the home post before a crisis occurs.

- When the military makes a mistake, say so and do not try and cover up the mistake. Hiding bad news only gets the military in trouble with the press and the American people.

- Never lie to the press. If operational requirements keep us from telling the whole story, then we must explain why we can't provide the information.

- The military must set firm ground rules. As long as the rules are justified, the press and the American people will understand.

- Media pools are necessary in future conflicts. By using pools, we are able to limit access and control coverage in the areas of conflict. Pools also allow the media to cover the initial events of the operation.<sup>101</sup>

-For media pools to be successful, transportation assets must be dedicated to each pool. Military escorts must be able to communicate with commanders and their logistical support. If escorts must screen initial reports before they are released, then the escort must be educated about this job. Field commanders must know that media pools are authorized and considered an important part of the operation.

-Media pools are only successful if the story gets to the news organization in a timely manner. Proper support facilities must be established at the start of the operation.

-The concept for the Joint Information Bureau and other public affairs elements must be re-looked. In peacetime, public affairs offices are not staffed to handle war situations.

-Daily briefings are necessary for the press to get the full picture. Daily briefings in Riyadh and at the Pentagon were confusing.

-Military public affairs needs to better train officers and soldiers about press interviews. All TRADOC schools should have instruction on how to cope with the media.

-The concept of the combat journalist should be considered for future operations. Local, regional, and national reporters selected by their news organizations should be trained by the military and assigned to specific units. These reporters should then be required to spend so much time with their units during training. If a war occurs, when that unit goes, so does the reporter. This will provide initial coverage and in-depth coverage by experienced correspondents who know and understand their unit.<sup>102</sup> Media pools can cover the briefings and report on the overall operation.

Hopefully, this paper has served to stir an interest in the ongoing battle between the military and the media. It is important for the reader to understand that the American people have a right to know about military operations. By working together, the military and the media can provide enough information for the American people.

Advances in communications technology have made the military aware of the need for strict ground rules for the media to ensure

the security of the operation and safety for the soldiers. The media also needs to recognize the requirement for these rules and needs to educate their reporters so that violations will not happen during conflicts.

If the military and the media can understand these concepts, then they should be able to work together to ensure that the American public is informed about current military operations.

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